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Interview with Evelyn McClure for the Western Sonoma County Historical Society

EM: Where were you born?

GS: I was not born in Sebastopol, born in Newcastle, Indiana and my family moved to Sebastopol in 1965, I was 2-1/2 at the time. So not quite a native.

EM: Were you in town or outside?

GS: We were just outside on Hurlbut Avenue.

EM: Where'd you go to school?

GS: All the Sebastopol schools, Parkside, Brookhaven and Analy and Analy Nursery School, in fact my son went to Analy Nursery School for a year and had the same teacher that I did.

EM: How did you decide what you wanted to be, have you been a librarian all the time?

GS: I've only had my library degree for 7 years but I've been in libraries since graduating from school, perhaps it was destined to be. I came across a book that I had from my personal library when I was in third or 4th grade that I labeled with the Dewey decimal number and I had a scheme where I was going to lend out my books to friends and give them library cards.

EM: You do cataloging, my daughter is a cataloger too at St. John's college in Santa Fe. Technical Services.

GS: That's my thing too, I work the reference desk for a few hours but primarily a cataloger.

EM: Why I wanted to talk to you, you said you worked at the Walker Apple Ranch.

GS: I did and it wasn't actually not the Lee Walker Ranch, it was his brother.

EM: Was it on Vine Hill, Bob Walker. We talked to Lee recently.

GS: Yes Bob Walker's operation actually off Graton Road, a lane off Graton Road. I worked there summers while I was in college.

EM: What kind of thing did they do there, pack apples?

GS: Yeah, pack apples.

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EM: No canning or drying?

GS: Just packing fresh apples.

EM: You were in high school?

GS: I think I was probably in college when I was working there, I don't think I did.

EM: Did you go to Sonoma State?

GS: I went to Stanford. So I worked there with all my friends. The first year I was there I was working the box stapler and stapling countless boxes.

EM: They were packed in cardboard?

GS: Yes.

EM: What was their amounts, like tonnage or whatever they produced.

GS: I wish I could tell you. I don't actually remember. We were kept busy during the season, they employed probably about 20-25 people. There were the ladies who were on quality control and sorting and then all the young people working on other parts of the operation. My buddy drove forklift. My second year there I operated the apple washing machinery.

EM: Do you remember how many acres of apples they had?

GS: Must of been about 25 acres or so. I think all the apples were just from that property. It was a lot of golden delicious while I was there they were sending some test shipments to Japan. Were putting them into a shipping container and we had no confidence they would arrive in any kind of shape.

EM: They weren't refrigerated?

GS: They may have been once they were on the ship. But they weren't going into the truck that way.

EM: What year was this?

GS: Around 1982.

EM: Who hauled that away, some trucking company, they didn't do it themselves?

GS: I believe so, it was one of the challenges of that operation was the lane going up to it, it was

very narrow with twin Redwoods, trucks had to pass through and not every one made it, including me, my last day of work.

EM: Lee was telling us that he and his brother had inherited property they decided Lee was going to take the piece they are on and Bob would take the other piece.

GS: Yes.

EM: But it was off Graton road?

GS: Yes, (near/off?) Peaks Pike Road

GS: I also worked at Manzana

EM: What did you do there?

GS: I worked the line taking jars of apple sauce, and juice already canned and stacking them. I may have operated one of the canning lines at one point too. I worked there a couple seasons as well and one of the memories I do have of there was that we packed one of the train cars with apples. It may have been the last one that they ever shipped out.

EM: Was it fresh apples?

GS: The fresh apples. I think, ~~no~~ it was cans and jars.

EM: And it ran on the Petaluma and Santa Rosa Railroad because they were doing freight.

GS: Still on the freight. I watched them load it and go out.

EM: Was it labeled specially, the car, with banners?

GS: No, just a refrigerated car.

The property I grew up on was an apple orchard.

EM: What did your parents do with the apples?

GS: We always had it leased out and never processed them ourselves other than for personal use and cider. I think it was when we moved there it was Furusho operation at that point and various other people took it over during the years.

EM: Didn't you have about 14 acres?

GS: Not that many, about 6 acres in apples, but we were adjoining all the other orchards there. We did make our own cider, freeze it, for years. Even in high school, I made it and sold it around

the neighborhood.

EM: Did it ever turn into hard cider.

GS: Oh yes, we did that too. But I had a business going.

EM: Did you dry apples yourself?

GS: We did, my father (Hal Skinner) came into (?) a bunch of prune racks that were up in Healdsburg and tried those for drying apples and ultimately made his own frames.

EM: For drying out in the sun? Did that work ok?

GS: Yes, for years, you had to cover them to keep the insects out.

EM: But you have to hand slice them?

GS: Yes, he spent a lot of time hand slicing. He made an awful lot of dried apples. We finally cleaned out the attic last year and cleaned out some of the dried apples he had done, they had been there a long time.

I took part in the apple blossom parade, Kathi (Geoffrey's sister, now Kathi Jacobs) was queen.

EM: Do you do anything now? Work with any group that does parade activities? What did you do before in the parade?

GS: Band first of all but then my father had his horse drawn vehicles and several times we took one of those in the parade.

EM: So you played French horn, in high school?

GS: Yes, junior high and high school.

EM: Do you take lessons with John Lounsbery? (JL plays in the Santa Rosa Chamber orchestra, GS and EM both attended a recent concert)

GS: No but he's offered if I ever want a coach, give him a call. Kathi actually played in that group when it was the Baroque Sinfonia.

EM: Really, well its been around a long time.

Well thank you Geoff, there's some good memories here.